

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

ALBERT LOCKYER

AUGUST 21, 1989

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY ANDREW DUNAR

ORAL HISTORY #1989-3

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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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ABSTRACT

Albert Lockyer worked in the Truman Home on several occasions performing remodeling tasks to prepare the home for the Truman's return from Washington, D.C. Lockyer describes the Trumans' attitude towards the workers and the various changes made in the attic in 1954 and 1955. Lockyer also recalls the construction of adjustable bookcases in the study.

Persons mentioned: C. E. Anderson, Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, A. K. Dilley, Averell W. Harriman, Mike Westwood, and Mary Jane Truman.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

ALBERT LOCKYER

HSTR INTERVIEW #1989-3

ANDREW DUNAR: Okay, we're seated in the living room of the Truman house. This afternoon, we're interviewing Mr. Albert Lockyer. Today is August 21, 1989. Mr. Lockyer, to begin, could you just tell us a little bit about your background? About how you came to get this job in the first place?

ALBERT LOCKYER: Okay. I was born in Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1921, and in 1953, in the fall, we moved to Independence. It was in the spring that Andy Anderson asked me if I would work for him here at the Truman home. That's how I came to work here.

DUNAR: Had you worked with Mr. Anderson on a previous job? You said this was your second job before we started.

LOCKYER: Yes, and I worked for him afterwards. This was probably the first one with him.

DUNAR: This is the first job you had with him?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Okay. Do you know anything about how he got this contract to work on the Truman house?

LOCKYER: I don't know just how he got this one.

DUNAR: Could you tell us what happened when you first came to the house? Your first experience when you came to the house here?

LOCKYER: Well, I came with quite a bit of an awe, to think that I was coming into the

home of an ex-President of the United States. And, of course, in Canada we kept quite a close contact, with being interested in moving to the United States, in the leadership here, and I'd heard a lot of good things about Mr. Truman. And the friendly way he accepted us, it was a good feeling.

DUNAR: Were Mr. and Mrs. Truman home when you came over the first time?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: And can you recall the first time that you met each of them?

LOCKYER: No, I don't believe that . . . I was just too awestruck, I believe. [chuckling] But I just felt it was an honor to be able to give of my talents. I felt qualified to be able to work in a place like this. I had worked at . . . My dad was a small contractor in Canada, and I had worked since I was seventeen on contracting work.

DUNAR: When you started . . . Well, could you explain who were the members of the work crew?

LOCKYER: Well, it was Eldon Anderson, really, but I call him Andy, and A. K. Dilley was our laborer, and myself. There was one other painter that worked on the job and I don't remember his name, but he was a local man.

DUNAR: Is that Mr. Nickles?

LOCKYER: Mr. Nickles, that's right.

DUNAR: Did he work for Mr. Anderson or was he a separate contractor?

LOCKYER: I couldn't swear to that. I'd have to let Andy speak for that.

DUNAR: But you worked together?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Sort of more or less as a team, once you were working here.

LOCKYER: Yes, right.

DUNAR: Yes, okay. You told us an incident just before we started taping about something that happened with Mrs. Truman. I wonder if you could repeat that story?

LOCKYER: Yes. This incident happened the very first morning we worked here. We started at eight o'clock and visited with Mr. Truman, and he instructed us what he wanted us to do. We were working on the top story of the house. If my memory serves me right there's about ten valleys in that . . . hips and valleys in that area. But he had told us that he should have asked us for two or three hundred thousand dollars liability insurance because of the things that was up there, but he said, "You boys look pretty good. I'm not going to require it of you." [chuckling] So that made us feel much better.

He had told us there were some bushel baskets of odds and ends of wallpaper, and he told us just to take them out and burn them in the barrel. So we proceeded, after he had left, to do this. About ten or ten-thirty, Mrs. Truman came upstairs and she said, "Where is my wallpaper odds and ends?" We said, well, we had burnt them. She felt very indignant about this. [laughter] I believe it was Mr. Harriman that was coming to the home, and she wanted to patch a place in her bathroom. And so now her paper was gone, the pattern. We thought maybe our job was just two hours or two and a half hours. But, anyway, the next morning she came up and she had talked to Mr. Truman about it. And he said, "Yes, I had told them to burn that wallpaper." And she apologized to both of us. And to me, at that time, she became a giant of a woman, because I've known many women that wouldn't

have even have bothered to have done that, and I had a lot of respect for her.

DUNAR: You mentioned, too, that the following year when you came back to work again that she . . .

LOCKYER: Yes, the following year when we came back to work about ten days—the first job we had worked about ten weeks here—she came up and greeted us in the back yard with a nice pan of homemade chocolate fudge, and just greeted us like we were her sons, and this really made us feel good.

DUNAR: Now, as I understand, the work that you did was divided into a series of contracts. Do you remember the first responsibility that you had when you came?

LOCKYER: The first we worked on was the top story, the attic part of the house, and it was, I remember there were some real compound miters we had there because of so many valleys. And it had never been finished upstairs. It was all in the native lumber.

DUNAR: What sort of structural problems were there in the attic? You mentioned that it had valleys. Were these dips in the floor? Is that what they were?

LOCKYER: No, it was just that they needed that . . . It had never been . . . It was just in the rough form. The rafters and everything had never been covered.

DUNAR: So was there some decay then from water damage?

LOCKYER: No, it was just that we finished it. We put on some type of a board—I'm not sure of the name of it now—but I do remember we had to make these compound miters because we put in a knee wall, and then you'd come with . . . you'd put one on and then have to put the other one to bevel it to match, see, the others that was there.

DUNAR: So it was a matter of finishing it off, rather than repairing it?

LOCKYER: Yes, we was finishing it off. The attic was . . . I still remember and I can almost [chuckling] smell it, the nice hams that he had. He said he'd got them from Tennessee and different places that they'd given to them, and they were hanging from the rafters.

DUNAR: Oh, no kidding.

LOCKYER: And also his World War II uniforms was hanging there.¹

DUNAR: Oh, did he have those hanging on racks then, the clothes?

LOCKYER: The clothes were just hanging from the rafters, and the hams, and then on the floor was quite a few of Margaret's toys. And I never have had the privilege of meeting Margaret. I always wanted to. [chuckling] I just didn't have the opportunity.

While we were here, Mrs. Truman and Mr. Truman went to Washington for ten days and we had full control of the house.

DUNAR: Was that during the first year, during '54?

LOCKYER: That was in '54, yes. We had a key to the back gate, which is in the kitchen, I believe, if my memory serves me right.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: Yeah, and there was another . . . There was a police officer we were supposed to call, in case of anyone coming on the grounds. Well, I'd know his name if I heard it.

DUNAR: Mike Westwood?

LOCKYER: Yes. Yes, he was the man we were supposed to call.

These would have been World War I uniforms, and/or uniforms from service in the

DUNAR: Yes, was there any occasion to call him at all?

LOCKYER: No. No, it was . . . I remember one day . . . We used to take the material up over this back side to the top story, so we didn't have to come in through here, up on long ladders.

DUNAR: On the south side of the house?

LOCKYER: No, it would be the east side of the house.

DUNAR: Oh, on the back.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Okay.

LOCKYER: And I remember Andy was taking up a fifty-pound keg of nails one day on his shoulder and he almost fell over backwards off the ladder. [laughter] I don't know whether I should tell this on Andy, but it was a very close call because he was a long way up.

DUNAR: Yes. Did you get the materials in then? I know you replaced some of the windows with those louvered windows.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Did you bring material in through those windows?

LOCKYER: I would think we did, yes. I . . .

DUNAR: Go ahead.

LOCKYER: Pardon me. That's all right.

DUNAR: Were you going to say something else?

LOCKYER: No, I just thought of the library, but you'd want that in a different . . . probably a different place.

DUNAR: Oh, yes, we'll get into that. And we can go in there and take a look at it.

LOCKYER: Okay.

DUNAR: I was wondering, too, you said the Trumans were out of town for a good deal of the time. Were they here for much of the rest of the time that you were working?

LOCKYER: Well, yes. We were here ten weeks, and they were gone ten days.

DUNAR: And they were here a lot of those ten weeks.

LOCKYER: Yes. I remember one incident one morning, after I'd kind of got to know Mr. Truman a little better. Just before he went to his office, he used to kind of come around and see what we were doing. And so that morning I thought I was going to be just a little bit smart, and I said, "Well, Mr. Truman, how would it be if I do your job today and you do mine?" "Well," he said, "that would be all right." I said, "Well, what would I have to do? I'd better find out that first." "Well," he said, "you'd probably have to dictate about fifty letters." I said, "In that case, I'm going to let you go to the office and I'll stay here working." [laughter] So we used to josh around quite a bit.

I remember one time through the job, he come home, and it was when we was getting it a little more . . . about two-thirds of the way finished, and he was real pleased. And I still remember him saying, "Two hundred and two percent." Now what the two percent was for, I'll never know, but he said, "Two hundred and two percent." [laughter] And that made us feel that he was pretty pleased about what we was doing for him.

DUNAR: Yes. Do you remember, did he come out and watch what you were doing then each day before he left for the office?

LOCKYER: We usually would see him in the morning and in the evening.

DUNAR: Okay.

LOCKYER: Yes, before we left. And we used to, when we'd finish in the evening, everything was cleaned up and vacuumed, so it was like when we started in the morning and there was no trash laying around when we finished.

DUNAR: Did he kind of check up on what you were doing each day? Or did he just come out to sort of talk with you?

LOCKYER: Just to come out and talk and see what we were doing. But I never remember a moment of criticism from him.

DUNAR: I know Mr. Anderson had said at one point that he had gone down—in another interview that they had done—that he had gone down to thank the people at the lumberyard, I think, for the help that they had in some of the lumber they supplied. Did he play any role in picking out the lumber or the materials that he used?

LOCKYER: You mean, Mr. Truman?

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: I don't believe so. I believe Andy bought all the material for it. Because, see, after we finished here, we went from here to Mary Jane's at Grandview and did a family room out there for her, too.

DUNAR: Oh, really? At the farm? At the farmhouse?

LOCKYER: At Grandview.

DUNAR: At the farmhouse at Grandview?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Oh, we'll have to talk a little bit about that then, too. Because I [didn't]

realize you even worked on that.

LOCKYER: Yes, as I say, we went out and we put in ash paneling in her family room.

And this Mr. Nickles also did the finishing on that.

DUNAR: I see.

LOCKYER: And he's a very fine workman, too, Mr. Nickles was.

DUNAR: You went down there immediately after finishing this job? That was the next job you did?

LOCKYER: Yes, if I remember right, we did. We went down, I believe, right after we finished the first time here. It was quite a while ago now, you know, to recollect it, to get it exact.

DUNAR: What was she like? The president's sister.

LOCKYER: A very fine little lady. I guess I just think of her as a little old lady.
[chuckling]

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: A very meek and mild sort of person.

DUNAR: Was she around when you were doing the work here?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: And did Mr. Truman come down there when you were working down there at all?

LOCKYER: I don't remember him ever coming down there when we worked on that.

DUNAR: And what work did you do down there? You said you did some paneling.

LOCKYER: It was the family room, finished the family . . . Yes, we did some . . . It was a quarter-inch raw ash, and then Mr. Nickles finished that. I remember he must have did it in a silver because I can still remember him scraping off a

lot of . . . He'd put the stain on and then take it off, so it was a special finish that he put on it.

DUNAR: Was that house in very poor shape at the time? I know they had to do a fair amount of restoration work before they opened it to the public. But what condition was that in at the time?

LOCKYER: You mean, out there?

DUNAR: Yes, there at . . .

LOCKYER: I don't remember it being in that bad of shape.

MICHAEL SHAVER: At that time, she may not have been living on the farm. She may have been living in town.

DUNAR: Oh, so this may not have been the farmhouse then. This might have been . . .

SHAVER: It was probably the house not far from the tracks in town.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Yes, okay, so this was probably not the farmhouse then. It might have been a house in town? Was it a tract . . .

LOCKYER: It was in the house in town. I remember that.

DUNAR: Okay. Okay, so it was the house in town.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Okay. Back then on this house, Mrs. Truman then was around all day while you were working, right? Is that right?

LOCKYER: Yes, except the time they were away, yes.

DUNAR: Right, when they were away. Did she come around at all during the day or did she just let you alone pretty much?

LOCKYER: No, she let us alone very . . . But you never felt out of place to chat with her.

Of course, when we was working up there, we usually tried . . . we didn't come through this area here. I think we did some work in the bathroom, but I'm not sure just what that was now.

DUNAR: The bathroom upstairs?

LOCKYER: No, the one downstairs here.

DUNAR: Okay.

LOCKYER: But we did . . . Of course, I guess Andy would have told you about the library, what we did in there.

DUNAR: Putting the shelves and things in?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: It's been said, sir, that this house was Mrs. Truman's responsibility and that she sort of ran things in the house. Did you find that to be the case on this project, too?

LOCKYER: No, I think . . . Now, she might have been . . . Maybe Mr. Truman was the head, but she might have been the neck that governed the head. [laughter] But we had most of our dealings with Mr. Truman, other than that, I remember that first incident because I thought, "Well, this is going to be a short job." [laughter]

DUNAR: But you dealt most directly with Mr. Truman then, right?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Did she come around once a day or so just to see what you had done, or anything of that sort?

LOCKYER: I can't remember just whether she made a regular . . . I did remember that Mr. Truman . . . it was either once or twice a day that he'd be around. And

we used to look forward to him coming.

DUNAR: Now, this was just shortly after they had returned from Washington, so there was still a lot of attention being focused on the Trumans. Were there any dignitaries that came? Anybody, while you were working on the house, that you recall? Any visitors? I mean, you mentioned Mr. Harriman.

LOCKYER: I think Mr. Harriman come, but I never met him. And then, of course, I guess it's the Wallaces that live right next door here.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: Yes, they'd come over once in a while.

DUNAR: Okay. Now, can you explain what the different jobs were that you did? You mentioned already some of the things you did in the attic and you mentioned very briefly the bookcases. What were the other things that you did overall, the overall tasks that you had here?

LOCKYER: That would be pretty much what we did. Because you've got to think of that attic. I've never had an opportunity to see it since we finished it, but that was a lot of work. Because if you'll look outside and see all of the hips and valleys in that room, and we put this half-inch board on there which was all mitered. I mean, we didn't just cover it up with a corner. When we come to a corner, we mitered the corners. Everything was mitered.

DUNAR: I see. By hips and valleys, do you mean the places in the roof and so forth.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Okay.

LOCKYER: And see, what we did, we put a wall in about thirty inches high, a knee wall down in about thirty inches, probably thirty inches high, and then we'd

follow the rafter on up. So you can imagine when we come to . . . come up like a board here, and then we had to bevel it here, then we had to bevel it over here in the valley. Confound it going angle wise, too.

DUNAR: That's a tough job, yes.

LOCKYER: It's quite an accomplishment.

DUNAR: Yes. It's been said that there was some fire damage in the attic previously, sometime long before you worked on it. Do you remember any indication of that?

LOCKYER: I don't remember that. I believe this was the first time this house had been remodeled though, hadn't it? When we were here in 1954?

DUNAR: Yes, I think so.

LOCKYER: I think so. I don't remember fire damage up there.

DUNAR: One other issue, just in terms of employment practices that comes up, is the question of union labor. Did that issue ever come up, do you remember?

LOCKYER: No, I don't remember.

DUNAR: Did they ever ask if you were union or . . . ?

LOCKYER: I don't remember that, although I was union and so was Andy. I believe Andy was union. Oh, yes, Andy was union.

DUNAR: He was union?

LOCKYER: Yes. Yes, I'm sure both of us was union. I know I was because I come from Canada and I had my union card from there.

DUNAR: Was that a Canadian union or an American union?

LOCKYER: Yes. Well, it's affiliated together, yes.

DUNAR: It was together. Okay, okay. So all three of you . . .

LOCKYER: In fact, I belonged to two unions when I come down here. I belonged to the engineer and operators and I belonged to the carpenters union, and I had to decide which one down here. They didn't like you belonging to two unions. So I had to decide which I would follow, and so I decided I would follow the carpenters.

DUNAR: Yes, but that issue never came up while you were working here then?

LOCKYER: No, no.

DUNAR: Now, during the day for your meals, for lunch and so forth, would you bring your own lunch? Or what would you do for lunch?

LOCKYER: Yes, we'd bring our own lunch, I believe, and we'd pretty much just eat up there.

DUNAR: Just eat up where you were working?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Would Mrs. Truman ever bring you anything during the day? Anything to drink or anything of that sort?

LOCKYER: Now, the drink I couldn't say, but food, I would say no.

DUNAR: You brought your own drinks in for lunch?

LOCKYER: Yes. Of course, I don't drink any alcohol of any kind and I don't smoke and no drugs.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: Of course, we didn't hear too much about drugs then. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Right, right. Did you drink water up there then?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Did you have water available? Was there a faucet?

LOCKYER: Well, I would probably have brought ice water in the thermos with me, yes.

DUNAR: One other concept, too, in addition to the things that you already mentioned that were in the attic, that there were also a lot of the treasures that President Truman had received from foreign leaders and other gifts that had been given to him while he was in the White House. Do you remember seeing any of those in the attic while you were working in it?

LOCKYER: Not too much of them, other than his uniforms and things and gifts of like these hams, smoked hams. That was hard just to unhang them and put them away. [laughter]

DUNAR: That's right.

LOCKYER: Now, some of the things I imagine that he had up there is over in the Truman Library.

DUNAR: In the library, yes.

LOCKYER: We also went over and put up some picture railing that some of the . . . I believe, the president's pictures were hung on. I know we went over there and did some work in the library, at one time there when they built the library.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right? When would that have been, at the library?

LOCKYER: That would be just after that, wouldn't it?

DUNAR: The library didn't open until '57.

LOCKYER: Yes, so whether that was when we come back the ten days and we went over there . . .

DUNAR: Oh, so it was while they were still building the library then?

LOCKYER: Yes, because we did put up those, I remember.

DUNAR: Oh, okay. The hams that you mentioned, what were they using them for?
Was there a big gathering that they had here or something for those?

LOCKYER: No, it was just some that he was given from the states, from Tennessee, I believe, when he was president.

DUNAR: And they were just storing them?

LOCKYER: They were just storing them. I guess, getting better with age. [laughter] They sure smelled good.

DUNAR: Well, maybe we should walk to some of these areas where you did some work, so you can tell us a little bit more about it and exactly what you did.

LOCKYER: Okay. [tape is turned off]

DUNAR: We're now in the study, and you did some work here, right?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Would you describe what you did?

LOCKYER: We did all the bookcases around here, and I guess that is about it. I don't think we did anything else, other than the bookcases, in here.

DUNAR: Okay. Were there any difficulties that you had at all, in terms of working around in a relatively small space here?

LOCKYER: No, I don't believe so. I don't remember anything that . . .

DUNAR: Do you remember what kind of wood the bookcases are made out of?

LOCKYER: I believe they're just a clear pine. If I remember right, I think they're just clear white pine, ponderosa.

DUNAR: And were they painted while you were still here? Or did that happen later?

LOCKYER: That would have happened later, because that was . . . we wouldn't cross over the line and paint them, being union. [laughter]

DUNAR: Well, that's true. That's a good point.

LOCKYER: No, Mr. Nickles would have painted them, I'm sure.

DUNAR: He was to be the painter, then?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Yes, but it was probably done during that same time.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: In other words, as soon as you finished them they were painted.

LOCKYER: Yes, right.

DUNAR: Do you know why they were painted? Whose preference it was that they painted them?

LOCKYER: No, I certainly don't. [chuckling] But if I remember right, the kitchen is green, too, isn't it?

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

LOCKYER: And so they must have liked green. [laughter]

DUNAR: I guess. Was the kitchen green at that time? Do you remember?

LOCKYER: No, I don't just remember on that.

DUNAR: Didn't that happen later? Or no, that had to happen sometime earlier.

SHAVER: I think that happened earlier.

DUNAR: Yes, that's right, that would have been.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: So somebody liked green. You don't remember who it was, whose preference that was?

LOCKYER: No, I don't remember whose preference was the green.

DUNAR: Now, in building the shelves, did Mr. Truman get involved at all, in terms of

the heights of the shelves or anything of that sort? Are any of these shelves adjustable?

LOCKYER: I believe these are adjustable, if I'm not mistaken.

DUNAR: Well, yes, that's right, these are.

LOCKYER: Yes, they are. The track is mortised in. See, right here?

DUNAR: Oh, yes, okay.

LOCKYER: No, that isn't. That's just the holes drilled in there. Sometimes what Andy and I used to do, we'd mortise in a track.

DUNAR: Yes?

LOCKYER: But this is not, this has just been drilled, the holes drilled in it.

DUNAR: So these are permanent then, the heights of the shelves? I mean . . .

LOCKYER: You can move them.

DUNAR: Okay.

LOCKYER: Right here.

DUNAR: Oh, I see, yes, that's right.

LOCKYER: Now, see these little holes?

DUNAR: Right.

LOCKYER: Where they put these little deals, they can move it.

DUNAR: Okay, okay. And that's true all the way around then, I guess?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Then all the shelves are adjustable.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Okay. And you did the molding on the top then, too? That was all part of the job?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: How were the shelves anchored?

LOCKYER: I would think . . . maybe there's plywood on the back. I wouldn't say for sure. I don't remember that.

DUNAR: What was in this room before the bookshelves were put in? Was there anything here before? Do you remember what this was?

LOCKYER: I just remember bare walls, myself.

DUNAR: Yes? Was it a study beforehand, do you know?

LOCKYER: I don't know. It's a good possibility that it would be. But I wouldn't like to say one way or the other.

DUNAR: Right. Now, when you were working here, which way did you bring the wood in, the lumber you were using for the construction?

LOCKYER: I don't remember that.

DUNAR: Did you come through the kitchen at all or anything?

LOCKYER: Well, I imagine some would come through there. And knowing the way we used to work, if we could get them through the window we would.

DUNAR: I see.

LOCKYER: But most all the cutting would have been done outside. We'd cut it out, cut it and then bring it onto the job.

DUNAR: I see.

LOCKYER: Yes.

SHAVER: What about upstairs? Did you cut the wood upstairs?

LOCKYER: Yes.

SHAVER: Or did you cut it outside and then bring it in?

LOCKYER: Upstairs, that was all done up there.

SHAVER: Okay.

LOCKYER: We handed it up the ladder there and took it in through . . . up there.

DUNAR: Was Mrs. Truman concerned at all about . . . With this work going on in this living area, was she concerned about the other furniture or anything getting damaged? Did she express any . . .

LOCKYER: If she did, she never let us know. [laughter] There was only one time that she had concern. [chuckling]

DUNAR: What was that?

LOCKYER: Well, that was the time on the paper.

DUNAR: Oh, with the wallpaper, yes.

LOCKYER: [laughter] I'll never forget that.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: Well, I could understand, too. Because, you know, she couldn't replace it. It was irreplaceable.

DUNAR: Right.

LOCKYER: That probably was done years before, and she just had these few rolls of each kind, you know. And it's good to patch it, rather than have to do the whole bathroom over again.

SHAVER: Don't worry, she kept every batch she had put up after that. [laughter]

LOCKYER: I just made a trip. I don't know whether you'd like me to do some comparison here.

SHAVER: Go for it.

DUNAR: Sure.

LOCKYER: We went through Mr. Eisenhower's . . . at Abilene, Kansas?

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: And we seen the humble way that he had lived as a boy, through his parents. And then I thought of the Trumans, how they were very humble in the way they lived. We went through Salt Lake City, through Brigham Young's house, and the difference is . . . it was just he had all the fancy stuff that had been brought from the east over. And I thought, "Well, how many of his members over there had the privilege of living of in a . . . it's a mansion is what it is."

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: The woodwork is simply out of this world. I mean, it's nothing humble like this at all. And they're capitalizing on it right now.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: But I almost told them that he lived a lot higher than what our two presidents did. [chuckling] Just a passing thought.

DUNAR: Yes, yes. Well, let's see, the bookshelves then was the project in here, right? And the picture . . .

LOCKYER: Yes, that was . . . There was no bookcase, as far as I remember, in here at all.

DUNAR: Was there any other work you did at all on this floor?

LOCKYER: Not on this floor, I don't believe.

DUNAR: Well, maybe we should go up to the attic then and see what we can see up there.

LOCKYER: Oh, that would be a privilege to see that again. [chuckling]

[End #3590; Begin #3591]

LOCKYER: I didn't expect to see this! [chuckling]

DUNAR: Give us what your first impressions are, since you haven't been up here in quite a number of years. About thirty-five years?

LOCKYER: My first impressions! [chuckling] My first impressions of this is . . . I don't know, I would expect to find a nice pretty place here, what it was like when we finished it. Now, this is a kind of an insulation board. And see, these are the places where we went in the corners there, then built those walls down the side, the knee walls, down the sides. Huh! Well, I am thoroughly exasperated. I can't understand it, unless they had . . . they must have had leaks.

SHAVER: Oh, yes.

DUNAR: There were, yes. There were plenty of leaks.

LOCKYER: And that's went into this here. This is a . . . well, as you can see from the end, it's a kind of a insulation board.

DUNAR: Could you describe, just in general, then, give us an overview of the work that you did here? Just pointing things out so we can them on tape.

LOCKYER: Well, I do remember that window especially. Not so much this, but I expect we did that one at the same time, I don't know. But I remember this window here that we did work on.

DUNAR: Now, what was here before? What kind of a window was here before?

LOCKYER: I think the shape was the same. I couldn't remember, other than we had to put the jalousies in.

DUNAR: And you took that out and put in the louvered windows then, at some point?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Now, before you put in the windows, did you keep those areas open to bring supplies up here?

LOCKYER: No, our supplies came in right over . . . I believe there. Isn't there a porch just off of that window?

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

LOCKYER: We had long ladders and we carried it up and set it on the porch and handed it in that window.²

SHAVER: Let's go to that window over there.

LOCKYER: Okay.

SHAVER: If you want, you can go ahead and crank it open and peek out there and see if that's not where you were.

LOCKYER: Oh. Well, I think it would be that other one.

DUNAR: The next one?

LOCKYER: Yes, I believe that next one there. Because there's about a . . . There should be, if I remember right, about an eight-foot or a ten-foot roof there, isn't there?

DUNAR: I'm not sure.

LOCKYER: It should be back from there over to there, so it should be about a ten-foot . . . Do you want me to go over and look?

SHAVER: Oh, you can. It's not going to be real easy to get over there though.

LOCKYER: Oh, well . . .

SHAVER: Go ahead and disregard the theater cord. We just put that up there for our own safety.

²The southernmost window on the east side.

LOCKYER: Yes, okay.

SHAVER: You just have to do a tap dance.

LOCKYER: Yes, this is where we brought it up. I'll close it up here. That's the one that Andy almost fell off of, off the ladder there, because that's two stories up.

DUNAR: Coming up here, carrying a keg of nails, wasn't it?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Yes. So everything had to be brought up. Did you bring some things up using ropes, or was everything carried?

LOCKYER: Yes, we'd use ropes at times, and at other times hand it up and the other one would be up here and take it on in through.

DUNAR: So the work you did here then, you put all of this covering on, right?

LOCKYER: All of this board, yes. This here and these one-by-fours. But, see, at the time when we was doing this work, this was all fitting in, fitting in right like that. See, those was compound miters when you come, like you go on down, and that's mitered down there onto that.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: When you hit places like this, you had to miter them that way, too.

DUNAR: Right, that's what it is.

LOCKYER: And believe me, it didn't look like this when we had that finished. [laughter]

DUNAR: So there has been a lot of water damage here, too.

LOCKYER: Well, I'd like to find a place where there wasn't any water damage. This is more what I remember it like, when these was right up like that.

DUNAR: So you had to put all the framing in then, too, right? Underneath?

LOCKYER: The one-by-fours, yes. They all went in, the same thing up here.

DUNAR: Now, I see certain places where there is some wiring underneath. What was the quality of the wiring that you encountered when you . . . on the ceiling? Or wasn't there too much wiring up there?

LOCKYER: I don't remember the wiring end of it.

DUNAR: Maybe some of that might have been put in later, too.

LOCKYER: I shouldn't have ever seen this because it's . . . It kind of makes me feel bad to see it look like this. Have they did anything to the roof since, to have stopped the moisture coming in?

DUNAR: Yes.

SHAVER: Yes.

DUNAR: Yes, that's been . . .

SHAVER: Brand-new roof.

LOCKYER: I see.

DUNAR: But there was a lot of damage before that.

LOCKYER: Now, the hams, I remember them. They used to hang right over there.³ [chuckling] Yes, and on that wall there where it turns down, they'd be hanging from the rafters. And then his uniforms used to be behind that fireplace hanging.⁴

DUNAR: Do you remember anything else that was up here then?

LOCKYER: Some of Margaret's toys. They used to sit some of them in a box over there, little doll houses and things like that, that she had.

DUNAR: Doll houses?

LOCKYER: Yes.

³From the rafters at the north end of the attic.

DUNAR: Was there any other work that you did up here, in addition to doing this here?

LOCKYER: No, not that I remember.

DUNAR: Did you do any work on the floor? Did you do some work on the floor up here?

LOCKYER: I can't remember that either.

DUNAR: Okay.

LOCKYER: I'm sorry. [chuckling]

DUNAR: No, that's okay.

LOCKYER: I would have liked to have been able to share.

DUNAR: Yes. How about the . . .

LOCKYER: It's quite possible that we did because . . .

DUNAR: I think there was some work done on the floor.

LOCKYER: Because it was just simply a raw attic up here. You know, those rafters, all that native lumber is rough-sawn. They weren't even planed. It was hard to work with. But I knew . . . wherever we had walls like this, we put those little short walls in there.

DUNAR: Did Mr. Truman come up here then, at the end of the day, to see your work up here?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: In the morning and in the evening he'd come up?

LOCKYER: Usually morning and evening. Once in a while he'd miss a morning, but we used to generally see him in the evening.

⁴On the west side, above the entryway to the house.

DUNAR: Would he always comment on the progress you had made during the day?

LOCKYER: Yes, he would comment to us. But just that one time, he said, “Two hundred and two percent.” [chuckling]

DUNAR: Right.

LOCKYER: It don’t like two hundred and two right now. [laughter] But something sure happened to this work.

DUNAR: Now, you came in . . . two different years you came. And was this completed in one year, then?

LOCKYER: The first time was the ten weeks. We come in the spring of ’54.

DUNAR: Fifty-four, right.

LOCKYER: And then I can’t remember, I know it was ten days the next time we come back.

DUNAR: Was that the following year?

LOCKYER: And that’s probably the year that we went from here over to the library and put those . . . hung those picture rails.

DUNAR: Now, the library must have been, at least the section of the library you were in then, must have been pretty well along, right? Is that right?

LOCKYER: Yes, it was. And I don’t remember what year they opened the library.

DUNAR: The library opened in ’57.

LOCKYER: Fifty-seven?

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: So it would be probably ’56 maybe.

DUNAR: Fifty-six?

SHAVER: Yes.

DUNAR: So did you work here three different years? Because I think there was some work done in '54 by Anderson and then in '55. Did you come back a third year, do you remember?

LOCKYER: Well, I don't remember a third year coming back.

DUNAR: Okay.

LOCKYER: I just do remember us putting in the picture rails of the library.

DUNAR: Okay, is there any other impressions you have up here now, since you've had a little bit of a chance to look around?

LOCKYER: Yes. I'd love the opportunity to finish this here up the right way. [laughter] I'd like to do it now. I wouldn't use that board, for one thing.

DUNAR: It didn't stand up to the water too well, did it?

LOCKYER: No, it didn't. That board didn't do that. I've always had the dream that it was nice up here and that this was where Margaret come when this was her home in Independence. Well, I wouldn't want to make too much of a home up here right now. [laughter]

SHAVER: Well, off the record, I'll tell you, just before the house was opened, we were remodeling it and stabilizing it, and . . . I'll shut that thing off. [tape is turned off]

DUNAR: Right over here, you've got a piece of stripping down the side in the corner. Was that like that in most places? Or is that the only . . .

LOCKYER: No, that shouldn't . . . That must have been put there by someone else.

DUNAR: That's someone else's. Okay.

LOCKYER: No, Andy would have never allowed anything like that.

SHAVER: Do you recall the attic fan up here? There's a big attic fan. I guess it would

be. You wouldn't put the board there, I guess, if it hadn't.

LOCKYER: No, I don't. All I can remember is those compound miters.

SHAVER: Because underneath that sloping plane is an extremely large attic fan, and I guess that's why the louvered windows were put in, so it would have somewhere to exhaust.

LOCKYER: Yes, right.

DUNAR: Now there was some talk about doing something with the colored glass windows.

LOCKYER: I see.

DUNAR: Do you remember anything about that at all?

LOCKYER: No.

DUNAR: That discussion? It was decided not to do it at the time, but there was some discussion about doing it. Do you remember any of that?

LOCKYER: No, I don't remember that. I just always remember the louvered windows, that somebody show me a picture of Truman house and it didn't have . . . If they said it was back in 1890, and with that window in, I'd say, "You're wrong."

DUNAR: They colored it out, yes. Are there any other distinguishing features that you could notice, having worked on this?

LOCKYER: No.

DUNAR: [unintelligible] when things were done?

LOCKYER: I don't believe . . .

SHAVER: I guess you hand-sawed all this. You didn't have any machine saws or power saws up here, did you?

LOCKYER: Oh, yes, we had power saws up here.

SHAVER: You had power saws? Okay.

LOCKYER: Yes, we would have a table saw and Skil saws, yes.

DUNAR: These are pretty big panels, some of these, to bring up through that window.

LOCKYER: Yes, they're light, they're not heavy. But, you know, they're just like an insulation board. They're almost like the old beaver boards that we used to put on in Canada years ago, before sheetrock come out.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: In Canada we called them gyprock. Down here you call it sheetrock.

DUNAR: How would you bring up panels this size? This panel over here is a big panel, the ones on this side.

LOCKYER: Well, you could come up there and bring it, slide it up the ladder and then turn it on its side to come in that window.

DUNAR: I see. So somebody would get down and push it up?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: You wouldn't put ropes around it or anything? You just had somebody push it up?

LOCKYER: I don't expect so.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: Oh, we could have put ropes. That's not as heavy as sheetrock, though.

DUNAR: Yes, and then you'd do the trimming?

LOCKYER: I'd hate to bring sheetrock up here. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Then you'd do the trimming up here.

LOCKYER: Yes. Oh, yes, we worked on it up right up here.

DUNAR: Was there any other spot that you did work in the house? Or just in the study and up here?

LOCKYER: No, I don't remember anything else that we worked on.

DUNAR: What did Mr. Truman tell you when the job was done?

LOCKYER: I don't remember. My recollections of our dealings with Mr. Truman was always on the up and up and good. His language sometimes wasn't the best, but Mrs. Truman used pretty good English. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Sure, sure, yes.

LOCKYER: But I never held that against him, even though I don't . . .

DUNAR: Did he swear a bit when he was talking to you?

LOCKYER: Oh, yes, he had a few of those words, you know? [chuckling]

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

LOCKYER: But I do remember he was standing up here when he said . . . he looked it over and he said, "Two hundred and two percent." And we knew he was pleased, yes.

DUNAR: Was that right at the end of the project?

LOCKYER: That was towards the end of the project, when we got some of these boards on and that. But it was a pleasant experience coming here. And I do remember Andy taking me out after we had . . . One day he took us out. It was getting pretty close to the finish and he says, "Come on, you Canadian," he said, "let's go and we'll have some ice cream." So we went and had ice cream and he handed me a check for a \$100 bonus. And that made me feel the United States was a pretty good place to work. [laughter] Yes, I thought that was pretty good.

DUNAR: How is Mr. Anderson to work for?

LOCKYER: Mr. Anderson is a perfectionist. How do you say it?

DUNAR: Is he a hard taskmaster?

LOCKYER: Yes. Yes, he is. He's a hard taskmaster. I guess that's the word that we need to use for him. [laughter]

DUNAR: What were you really going to say? [laughter]

SHAVER: We can scratch that.

LOCKYER: He's not an easygoing person, but he's still a good person. Let's put it that way.

DUNAR: Well, he must have done good work to be hired back again the next year, since you came back the next year.

LOCKYER: Yes. Oh, yes, he did good work. But I guess he didn't figure he was paid to be just a good personality to people.

DUNAR: Right. Now, there were three of you on the crew. How did you divide up the work?

LOCKYER: Well, A. K. Dilley, he would carry our materials for us. That was his job as a laborer.

DUNAR: So he's the one that pushed the panels up?

LOCKYER: Of course, Andy and I both being union, we didn't go carrying stuff. I got caught on that at Pleasant Hill.

DUNAR: Really?

LOCKYER: [chuckling] A labor steward caught me one day going thirty feet to pick up some material, and I'll tell you what . . . That was just before I had come here. I remember they called out the union steward out there and they fought

it out there. So we was crossing the railroad track. It ended up that we did the middle between the, the carpenters did the middle between the tracks and the laborer union did the sides of the tracks. [laughter]

DUNAR: Did you really have to be aware of those things, even though there were only three of you on the job, for this job?

LOCKYER: Oh, yes. Well, maybe not so much here.

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

LOCKYER: But out there we did, because the labor steward come up to me one day. We'd sent our laborer away to pick up some materials, and this was when . . . it was a cost-plus job, and when the union was a little stronger than it is now.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: And I got tired of waiting for him to come back, our laborer, so I said, "I'm going to go pick up this," and I went over and picked it up. And the labor steward seen me, he'd been standing off at a distance. He said, "You do that once more," he said, "you're off this job." I said, "Brother, you'll never have to worry, if I sit down all day." [laughter] Yes, the laborer was supposed to do his part.

DUNAR: Well, on this job, since you had one laborer, was he union, too?

LOCKYER: I don't think he was. No, he wouldn't be union.

DUNAR: But he would be the one then that would push these panels up the ladder and then . . .

LOCKYER: Yes, things like that, and get stuff.

DUNAR: Yes, and bring things up for you?

LOCKYER: Yes, brings things up that he could bring up.

DUNAR: He wouldn't do any of the sawing or the pounding?

LOCKYER: No. No, that was our job.

DUNAR: Yes. And you respected that all pretty . . . ?

LOCKYER: Yes, we respected that very much.

DUNAR: Yes, yes, okay. Well, is there anything we could see maybe on the outside of the building?

LOCKYER: Because, see, I had just come off this one job at Pleasant Hill, which was strictly union.

DUNAR: Right.

LOCKYER: I mean, union stewards stood there watching you. [chuckling] And I seen that job that one day close down, and they sent over to Kansas City for the head man. We all sat, waiting for him to come out and decide what they were going to do about it. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Oh, so it had become kind of a habit by then.

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: I wonder if there would be anything that we could see from the outside of the house that you'd want to point out, perhaps from the yard, if we looked up towards the house?

LOCKYER: I don't believe there's anything out there that I know of.

DUNAR: You don't? Oh, everything you did was inside then?

LOCKYER: Pretty well inside, yes.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: We used to come in the back gate here, to come in, and just park our

vehicles . . .

DUNAR: And then you'd have your supplies in the back yard and on the porch?

LOCKYER: Yes, yes.

DUNAR: Put things on the porch, too?

LOCKYER: Yes.

DUNAR: Okay. How would you protect the supplies from rain, if it rained? Or would you just bring in enough for each day?

LOCKYER: We'd get it out of that rain. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Yes, yes. So you brought everything up here pretty quickly then? As soon as you brought it, you brought it up?

LOCKYER: Yes. Yes, we'd pretty well get it up here. We didn't have to worry about it being stolen because nobody could get in there to steal it. [laughter]

DUNAR: Right, right.

LOCKYER: And then, of course, as I say, this is the place where I remember Andy coming back one day and saying that Ellis Lumber Company had offered to give us the materials for the job if they could advertise it was going in the Truman home. We wouldn't allow it.

DUNAR: Did he talk to Mr. Truman about that?

LOCKYER: I don't believe so. I don't believe he . . .

DUNAR: He just decided not to.

LOCKYER: He just decided we didn't want to do that.

DUNAR: Right. Was there publicity about this job, since this was the former president's? Did you get some publicity for Mr. Anderson's company?

LOCKYER: I've got a good many jobs off of it by just telling them I'd worked on it.

[laughter]

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: Yes, I have. Over the years I've got a lot of jobs off this.

SHAVER: Was there a lot of press people or folks walking by and trying to figure out what was going on, that you can recall?

LOCKYER: No, I don't remember too much. I think maybe I've seen maybe two or three press guys take pictures.

SHAVER: Did you keep any clippings off of this?

LOCKYER: I don't remember being bothered by them or anything like that.

DUNAR: Yes. Was there any attention at all to the fact that the president's home was being remodeled, do you remember, at the time?

LOCKYER: No, I don't remember that there was. There must have been, but, see, I was new to the town and I . . . Like now, I know more what's going on all the time, you know, being here for quite a while.

DUNAR: Sure, sure. Did Mr. Truman give you any souvenirs from the White House?

LOCKYER: No, never got any. I'm sure we could have. I had a chance to have got the medicine cabinet we took out downstairs. And I have kicked myself several times for not doing it. [laughter]

DUNAR: Did you keep any of the scraps of any of the work that you did?

LOCKYER: No, I didn't. I didn't keep anything.

DUNAR: No souvenirs at all?

LOCKYER: No souvenirs at all. [laughter] Isn't that crazy? And I had a letter that I had got from Princess Elizabeth, who is the Queen of England now. I got that back in about 1939. I had written to her for her eighteenth birthday, and my

parents said I wouldn't get any reply. I told them all about the sawmill we had up in northern Saskatchewan, and I got a reply. It said, "The Lady in Waiting to the Queen is hereby commanded by Her Majesty to thank Mr. Lockyer for the letter he wrote to Princess Elizabeth on her eighteenth birthday."

DUNAR: Well, that's interesting.

LOCKYER: So it was kind of nice.

DUNAR: Do you have anything with President Truman's signature on it?

LOCKYER: No, I don't.

DUNAR: Nothing at all?

LOCKYER: Oh, I could kick myself.

DUNAR: Just the memories though, yes.

LOCKYER: Yes, I do have good memories of this though.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: I do have good memories of the Trumans.

DUNAR: Do you remember any other incidents when President Truman came by and talked to you? Any stories he told you or anything of that sort?

LOCKYER: No, just other than telling us about the hams that he had got from the different places when he was president.

DUNAR: Yes.

LOCKYER: They probably thought they were ate up by then, but here they were hanging.
[laughter] They were pretty huge hams, about that big around.

DUNAR: How many were there?

LOCKYER: Oh, I would say there were four or five, at least.

DUNAR: Four or five?

LOCKYER: If my recollection . . .

DUNAR: So that's a memory you have of working in this house, the smell of the hams.

LOCKYER: Yes, right. [laughter]

DUNAR: Mike, do you have any questions?

SHAVER: No, none whatsoever.

DUNAR: Okay. Well, we sure appreciate it. Is there anything else you can think of that you want to get on the record concerning working on this job?

LOCKYER: No, I don't want to make a big nuisance of myself. [laughter]

DUNAR: Oh, no, no.

LOCKYER: All I can say is it was an honor to work for Mr. and Mrs. Truman.

DUNAR: Well, thank you very much. We sure appreciate it.

LOCKYER: Okay.

DUNAR: Okay, thanks a lot.

LOCKYER: Well, you're welcome. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW